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The Negro Farmer and Messenger

Published Bi-Weekly in the Interest of the Home, Farm and Garden; especially devoted to the Interest of Negro Land Owners and Tenant Farmers and Those Who Employ Negro Labor. The Only Negro Farm Newspaper in the World to be Circulated Among 2,000,000 Black Farmers.

Vol. 3 TUSKEGEE INSTITUTE, ALA., OCTOBER 7, 1916 No. 20

Bury The Boll Weevil

J. A. Evans, of the Agricultural Department, Washington, D. C., Gives Specific Advice as to How to Overcome the Boll Weevil Another Year. --- In a Strong and Emphatic Statement, Says Plough Under Early, Bury the Weevils and Prevent Hibernation

"Every cloud has its silver lining." The disastrous flood has made it possible to so completely exterminate the boll weevil, in central and south Alabama, that it will be almost impossible to find one in this territory next year before about August 15th, if the proper steps are taken. To do this, it is only necessary that all farmers pick out their cotton, and plow under or otherwise destroy all cotton stalks by September 20th, or at the very last, October 1st. It is easily possible to do this if organized concerted action can be secured. There is a very light cotton crop in this territory and it is practically all open now. Bolls not now fully grown and ready to open, will produce nothing but weevils, but will produce them, in great numbers until frost falls, if the stalks are not sooner destroyed.

The early destruction of the cotton stalks accomplishes two things: first, it kills the millions of boll weevil in the larvae or pupae state, in the immature bolls. These weevils, if not so killed, are the very ones which will later mature, go into winter quarters young and full fed, and are most certain to survive the winter. Second, it starves to death the adult weevils by depriving them of food for a period of 40 to 60 days. The average killing frost from Montgomery south comes about November 20th. Until this time the weevil cannot hibernate, but remains active, serching for food which they must have or starve. Very few if any of the adult weevils would survive this period if all stalks are destroyed not later than October 1st, and even those living to go into winter quarters would be so weakened they would certainly die during the winter. There is no uncertainty, no guess work about this. These results are absolutely certain to follow the complete destruction of all cotton stalks by the date named. Stalks plowed under add humus and help enrich the soil—possibly to the extent of $4.00 or $5.00 per acre in fertilizer value, but they must be completely covered at least four inches deep to kill the immature weevil in the green bolls. Farmers unable to cover them this depth should cut and burn the stalks instead of attempting to plow them under.

Business organizations and progressive farmers should at once take steps to secure concerted action as above outlined in every county in central and southern Alabama. Is it not worth any effort to be practically insured immunity from the boll weevils until August 1st or later next year?

Beautify That Farm Yard

By F. H. Cardozo,
Director of Agriculture, Florida State College, Tallahassee, Florida

Quite often we see an attractively planted front yard at the rural homes of some of our farmers, mostly the work of a good mother or daughter—seldom the work of the so-called farmer himself.

The condition of a front and back yard is generally an index to the character of the occupants of the house, most of them anyway. Those who have not studied the farm nature, the farm environment and its influences, etc., are likely to theorize on what some big man said in a book, somewhere, about the psychological aspect in the case, and ignore the practical trend of things, the circumstances surrounding his life, and the possible ambition hidden away in him or her, along some other lines than the aesthetic.

But entirely too often we see a front yard that savors of a barn lot, and that particular farmer is more than likely to be well-off in this world's goods, reckless as to the baneful influence of such a filthy and badly arranged yard, careless as to the surroundings given to his wife and children. I remember three very prominent farmers whom I visited, dug their wells in the front yard, refused to plant a single tree in the bare, hot place; no vines on the porch, and for thirty years have been content to build up a good bank account from their good crops, at the expense of any beauty whatever, anywhere on the entire place.

We have seen many farm tenants who have lived on the same farm for years, with far better looking yards than some yards that were owned in fee-simple by the farmer of property.

Why is this? And yet we see too often this lack of civic pride in some of our educated people even, some of them professors in our colleges and institutes. Look around you if you doubt.

We tell the teachers in our summer school here that they can take lessons in flower culture from certain interested rural homes whose yards, although on the old colonial style, are beautifully laid out, planted, cultivated, etc. But such yards ought to be in greater number, and our exceedingly "busy" farmer should first clean up, give the wife a chance to fix up—but we forgot—all wives have not this ambition. The model landscape wife, however, is greater in number than the landscape husband and will, in most cases, plant and grow roses, shade trees, fruit, and such things, if the "busy" farmer husband will contrive to control stray chickens, pigs, colts, and calves—the necessary farm vandals.

Reasons for beautifying your farm:

1. Gives the owner more personal self-respect.
2. Increases market value of entire property.
3. Outsiders have more confidence in you, as to character, etc.
4. Shows a desire for system, order, and a desire for the beautiful.
5. Attractiveness of surroundings breeds ambition, generally leading in the right direction.

THE SCHOOL A CENTER

By Miss E. L. Gulley, B. S.,
Principal, Pickens County Training School
Carrollton, Alabama

The rural school, like the rural church, is the center of the life in a community. Last year we tried to make this true in Pickens County.

As soon as the building was ready for use, the people were so delighted with its attractiveness that they decided to have their Sunday services in it, although the church was scarcely a fourth of a mile distant. This continued throughout the school term.

One of the first speakers to come to us was Mr. Booker T. Washington, Jr. A large audience was present to meet him, in spite of the very inclement weather and the admission fee of twenty-five cents charged for entrance.

In February a Farmers' Conference was held and Mr. Rakestraw was invited to speak. There were present about three hundred people, many of whom, had never heard of such a meeting. There was never such a wholesale cleaning, whitewashing, repairing and remodeling throughout the county as there was after this meeting. Diversification was the key word as to farming. Many who had been planting fifty acres in cotton and twenty-five in corn, reversed this method. Food stuffs claimed everybody's attention.

The health of the people was not neglected. To promote better treatment of children, the "Theft of Thistledown" was rendered by the students. Houses were visited, and the Homemakers Club organized in each school district.

The County Institute brought together there the teachers, many of whom stayed for the Summer Normal.

The school's library is doing a big part in helping to stir up the community.

Memorial services for the late Booker T. Washington were held by the teachers of the

county. Nothing has done more to place industrial training upon a safe and sane foundation than this meeting. A life and a spirit so beautiful that it shall never die.

I must say a word about the people and their activities. Farming is the chief industry. There is a company of men who have leased a big plantation and who run the only cotton gin in that section. Last year, in spite of the boll weevil, more than five hundred bales were ginned by them. Many of the people own large farms.

The Agricultural Division of the Training School has the chance to help them in a way that no other can. We are trying to make the school do "the greatest good to the greatest number" of people, thereby "producing citizens with manual skill, scientific knowledge, individuality, which is the rightful business of the public school."

DO YOU KNOW?

That Mrs. J. B. Smith, Route 1, Box 49, Pansey, Alabama, owns 120 acres of land?

That she has sold—

70 bushels of corn, at 75 cents per bushel;
135 pounds of meat, at 10 cents per pounds;
1,700 pounds of fodder, at $1.00 per hundred;
1½ barrels of syrup, at 50 cents;
17 bushels of apples, at $3.00;
3 tons of hay, at $16.00;
6 bales of cotton seed, at $33.00 per ton.

Mrs. Smith has a yard full of chickens and sells every fall vegetables out of her garden.

Some Activities of the Mobile County Training School

By Isaiah J. Whitley,
Principal of the County Training School,
Plateau, Mobile County, Alabama.

It is generally known that Mobile County has just, for the past few years, become wide awake to agriculture. Before then its rural population had depended chiefly upon turpentine, saw-milling and charcoal burning for their support. About seven years ago the white people of the county became interested in agriculture and secured the services of a United States Farm Demonstrator, who has worked ever since among the white farmers in this county. His work has called the attention of the entire country to the wonderful possibilities of Mobile County as a live-stock and satsuma orange industry. As a result—many Northern farmers have been brought to this section, and all are making money.

About four years ago, the Mobile County Training School—(Then the Plateau Institute) took up the work of encouraging the colored population of the county and district to cultivate the soil. This work was started and has been kept up with no funds to be used in this direction.

Mobile County being largely adapted to trucking, live-stock and oranges, our school has encouraged this phase of agriculture. We have reached the people by organizing a Farmers' and Truckers' Conference which meets annually for a two-days session. Farmers and truckers are invited and are given instructions in gardening, livestock and home building. The white farm demonstrator, and Industrial agents from two railways and workers from Tuskegee attend these meetings and deliver lectures and demonstrations. The wives of the farmers and truckers attend these meetings and get lessons in gardening, domestic science and home-making. A Regular district organization has been formed; and in this way, literature and lectures are carried to the communities.

One and two-day farm institutes are held from time to time, by workers from the school and the people in the communities are taught how to cultivate the soil, how to cook, and preserve their health.

Mr. T. M. Campbell and his force of workers have come to the school's assistance by conducting, annually, a movable school through the county. The interest in agriculture has increased among the colored people of the county over two hundred per cent since this movement was started four years ago. Men are cultivating the soil, who never did before. In some of the communities where trucking was almost unheard of, now every available space is utilized for a garden or "patch." The inhabitants are happier and are living better.

It strikes me that every Negro rural school could, in some way, serve our people by leading them into better farming and comfortable homes. The teachers of these schools may not be able to do all that was done by the Mobile County Training School, conditions may not be the same, but every school in the South, located among our people, where they are between the sap and the bark, can do something to encourage and lead them into better conditions. I sometimes think that it is as much our duty to teach the weak and ignorant older people of our race how to preserve their health and to make a living as it is to teach the young ones the same. The Negro rural school is the hope of the community. It can serve as a little Negro Chamber of Commerce, bureau of information and labor as well as perform its allotted task to its pupils.

Oh, that the teachers would realize the opportunity that the school has to co-operate with the Extension Department of the Tuskegee Institute and the Department of Agriculture and industries in teaching our people better living.

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INDUSTRIAL WORK

By C. W. Greene,
United States Farm Demonstrator

I am glad to mention the name of a young man who lives in the Hickory Grove community, and who has done something very praise-worthy for himself, for the community where he lives and for the race of which he is a member. I know that business places set up like this one, need not be established at every fork of the road nor every two or three miles on any one road, but this place, in my judgment, is far enough away from any other place of its kind to furnish work for two men, and to be helpful and convenient to the passers-by, as well as those who live in the immediate community. The young man is Mr. McCaully, an ex-student having had limited advantages in the blacksmith trade taught at the Tuskegee Institute. I do not know just how long he stayed at the Institute nor what class he made, but I do know that he has opened up a splendid shop for doing and repairing any kind of iron or wood-work on the farm.

Mr. McCaully's shop is well furnished with kits of tools, many of which were made by him. He built his own forge, made his bellows, and is doing good work repairing wagons. A young man that takes up an idea and puts it into practice, as this young man has done, ought to be patronized by all farmers that may have from time to time such work to be done. This would prove a stimulant to the young man and an encouragement to the community.

PURE MILK FOR GOOD HEALTH

Baby's Supply Should Not Be Changed to Untried Source Which Might Spread Typhoid or Other Diseases

By Percy Werner, Jr.
Missouri Agricultural Experiment Station

Pure, clean, sanitary milk is necessary for babies and very important in the health of children and grown-ups. During this summer season when there is especial danger from typhoid, infantile paralysis, or other diseases which may be transmitted through the milk supply, it is especially important to patronize only those whose premises are carefully kept in accordance with the best methods prescribed by the inspectors. No change should be made from a supply that has been giving good results unless there is reason to believe that the new supply will be distinctly better.

Fortunately cows are subject to but few diseases that are dangerous to milk users. If a cow appears to be in good health and has no indications of udder inflammation, she can be counted on to give wholesome milk provided she is free from tuberculosis. The only way to be sure she is free from this disease is to have her tested by a competent veterinarian.

To keep dirt and bacteria out, the cows must be kept clean, especially in the region of the udder. The milk should be drawn into a covered pail which is thoroughly washed and scalded after each milking. Only good clean water should be used for this purpose.

No matter how carefully milk is produced, difficulty will be experienced in keeping it sweet if it is not kept cool until consumed.

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A. A. Chandler, Baldwin Farms, Route 1, Milstead, Alabama.

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VERNON W. BARNETT----*Editor and Business Mgr.*

Entered as Second-Class Mail Matter, February 4, 1914, at the Post Office at Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

Per copy	5 cents
Per year, post-paid	$ 1.00
Six months	.50
Three months	.40
Foreign subscription, per year	2.25

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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1916

WHAT AM I DOING TO ELEVATE THE COMMUNITY IN WHICH I LIVE?

A man's influence in his community is proportional to his activities. In fact, he weighs as much as he does and no more. We do not stand still. We go forward or backward. We elevate or retrograde. We improve or lower society. Comparison is the human mirror that reaches back as it were and paints a mental picture of our past and present self—of our past and present usefulness and enables us to measure our success or failure very accurately. We owe it to ourselves and to humanity to look about us once in a while and throw ourselves upon life's balances and determine our present condition. He who stands idly by and contents himself with doing day by day the same old things, in the same old way, is gradually sinking into a mire of stagnation that will ultimately overshadow his highest usefulness.

The Labor Exodus

At this very time we are facing a very serious proposition. A proposition which not only concerns the black man, but one which affects very seriously the condition of the entire South—the labor question. Our people are leaving the farms of the Southland by hundreds and going into sections of entirely different customs, climate and environments and it is a question in my mind as to whether or not this migratory tendency will work permanent good to our race. I have never been able to get away from that beautiful and far-reaching statement made famous in Dr. Booker T. Washington's Atlanta speech. "Cast down your buckets where you are."

It is true that the weevil and recent floods have brought us face to face with the most trying difficulties. It is equally true that no man can be happy whose wife and children are hungry and naked. But do we solve problems by running from them? I believe that the average white man of the South is willing to give every earnest and industrious colored man a chance. I am of the opinion that the Southern white man deeply sympathizes with the Negro by whom he is surrounded and will gladly make it possible for him to remain here and develop into a stronger and more useful citizenship. Ideal soldiery does not consist in running in the time of battle, but rather in standing together, working together, conquering together. Let me suggest to you that instead of running to other sections for temporary gain, get some oats right away and plant at least five acres to the plow.

Sow five or six acres of wheat and don't forget to uproot and plow under or burn your cotton stalks right away if you expect to get ahead of the weevil next year. I might as well say right here that no hard-hearted, indifferent person can expect to succeed at anything. The men who have grown cotton under boll weevil conditions had to do just what we are told to do.

Home Life

No community rises very far above the home life of the individuals composing it. Clean, intelligent and strictly sanitary homes are very essential to a useful and contented life. We can never expect to keep our youth contented on the farm unless we repair and whiten the walls of these dilapidated farm buildings and make the surroundings a place of beauty. There was a time when Negro boys and girls believed that only the "big house" should be clean, well built and painted and that to be black meant to live in a dingy house where they could see the sun rise and set without opening the doors and windows. But thank God! the civilization of today demands better things. The ambition of the rural boy demands ceiled and painted walls as well as a yard decorated by the choicest flowers. The rural boy or girl whose home life is pure and wholesome, looks brighter, happier and healthier and will hardly emigrate to any other section of the country. You cannot perform a greater service to your community and humanity than by seeing to it that your home and its surroundings are ideal.

The Widespread Educational Interest

The old mistaken idea that "Education spoils a good field hand," is a notion of the past and the entire country has fallen upon the same doctrine that not only does the proper development of the Negro greatly increase his earning capacity but strikes the courts of the land almost a death blow, and today white and black people are lined up in the one great and common cause of providing better educational facilites for the Negro youth of the land.

Through the generosity of Mr. Julius Rosenwald and the legal provision of the State of Alabama, every community may have an excellent schoolhouse and well trained teachers. It is only as the black man is trained will he be able to see and appreciate the vast possibilities of the South and content himself to help develop its wonderful resources. In this connection, too much cannot be said of the great work of Mr. James L. Sibley, State Agent of Negro Rural Schools of Alabama. Through his untiring efforts and wise direction there has been a revolution in Negro education throughout the State. Through his organizing ability, the pines of the forest, the fruits of the orchard, the vegetables of the garden, the lowing herd and grunting swine have all given rural education in Alabama a deeper and sweeter meaning.

A Final Suggestion

We might as well face the facts. If we would settle the present labor agitation, we must make rural conditions more satisfying. And we can best do this, not by so much "lip eloquence," for that is entirely too plentiful. It simply sharpens the appetite without creating the ability to satisfy it. Almost any weakling can paint word pictures. But we need first-class rural leadership that will live in the community every day in the year and knows how to focus rural interest and energy. Who not only tells me how to grow 100 bushels of corn to the acre, but shows me by growing it himself. Who not only tells me that the South is the garden spot of the world, but convinces me of this important truth, by his beautiful home, his up-to-date school, his model farm, his thorough-bred live stock and his bank account.

Excuses and shifting responsibilties will not solve the problem. I believe our hands are on the right key—every school an industrial and community center. Let's keep on turning this key and the door to the situation will open to the complete satisfaction of all.

CENTRAL TRAINING SCHOOL

Charity, Alabama, October 3, 1916.

To the Editor of
THE NEGRO FARMER AND MESSENGER:

I have been asked to express my views in a few words as pertaining to the Negro farmers of the South and more especially of this section of our State.

As you already know there are thousands of our people leaving the farms, much to our regret, and I am afraid that we, as a race, are going to make a serious mistake—a mistake that will hamper our future progress.

First, the Negro is especially adapted to a warm climate and there, he will naturally best thrive. Again, he was nestled and nurtured as an infant race here in the beautiful sunny Southland where natural environments enable him to become productive, strong and happy. What a happy home! A home long since envied by others who would gladly exchange their home for ours. Then why is he leaving such a pleasant home?

I have talked with hundreds of white land owners of various Southern States and not one was out of sympathy with the Negro labor on their plantations. I am satisfied, Mr. Editor, that as the reasons why appear, every white man of the South who is loyal to himself, to his country and to his God, will gladly correct this grave error. Nothing could happen to injure the South more in all phases of its progress than the dreaded abandonment of its farms by the Negro, and nothing could hurt the Negro more. Boll weevils, strikes nor war could incur as much economical disaster as the wholesale exodus of the Negro from the Southern States. For this reason, is it not the duty of both races to unite as one—find the cause—and speedily correct this blunder?

I might name some of the present impediments that the Negro is encountering. The boll weevil's ravages upon the only crop the Negro has been taught to grow in order to earn a livelihood, is a grave calamity. This doubtlessly throws him into his present condition. This condition is brought about by what we term natural disasters, long continued practice of the one-crop system and the lack of practical industrial education.

If the Negro could only learn that there is prosperity for him in the South and that remaining here would bring him the respect that all permanent citizens enjoy, this great annoyance would soon vanish. To give up in despair now would destroy all the good that has been done.

We notice that many of those men who are leaving are not taking their families with them. Many will never see each other again. What will be the outcome? It will create a greater tendency for dissipation and immorality which, at the outset, foretells our final destruction as a race.

Let us stay here, brothers, and place ourselves on record as men who are willing to shoulder our part of this great burden and fight it out like men, for this Nation has never refused to reward true manhood; let it be found in white or black.

C. P. EVERETT.

An Industrial Tour Through Fayette County, Tennessee

BY W. P. WARE,
Principal Fayette County Training School, Somerville, Tennessee

To the Editor of
THE NEGRO FARMER AND MESSENGER:

On August 30 and 31st, there began in Sommerville, Tennessee, an educational and industrial revival among the colored farmers and patrons of Fayette and Hardeman Counties. A conference was held on the 30th and 31st at the Fayette County Training School, Prof. W. P. Ware, principal. Several prominent white gentlemen addressed the conference on subjects pertaining to the progress of the Negro in Fayette County. Wholesome advice was given along agricultural and industrial lines. Mr. Latto, police officer for the town of Sommerville, Mr. Moffett, Farm Demonstrator, Squire Boyd, who has been Justice of Peace for thirty years, Mr. Maxwell, Postmaster and others spoke at length. Prof. Hampton, Supervisor of the State Normal at Nashville and Extension Agent, made an address on Thursday, August 31st. Hon. L. H. Hobson, who is much interested in the Negro along progressive lines, preceded Prof. W. M. Rakestraw of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, and who conducted a number of conferences with the farmers, and addressed them on how to improve themselves and their farms, homes, schools and churches. On Friday, September 1st, Prof. Rakestraw and Prof. Ware spoke at the Whiteville Colored Fair, the program for which was very excellently arranged. There was an Industrial and Educational exhibit of sewing, needlework, embroidery, and canning. Horse races and other things which make a fair successful had been planned. Prof. W. P. Ware was Master of Ceremonies. Prof. Hampton, of Nashville spoke, after which the speaker of the day, Prof. Rakestraw spoke to over a thousand farmers. The exhibit was creditable and was gathered from many parts of Hardeman County. The success of the fair was largely due to the conscientious efforts of Miss Mattie Tatum assisted by strong supporters made up of the best citizens of Hardemen County. The meeting on Sept. 2, was held at the park owned by Mr. Chas. Hodges, adjoining his beautiful home, with its tastily laid out front yard and a back yard as clean as a room and every part laid off and fenced showing Mr. Hodges to be an ideal farmer. The neat comfortable home several miles from the railroad has everything to make country children happy and contented to live on the farm.

There was an enthusiastic gathering of men and women who listened attentively to the new gospel —better farming and how to

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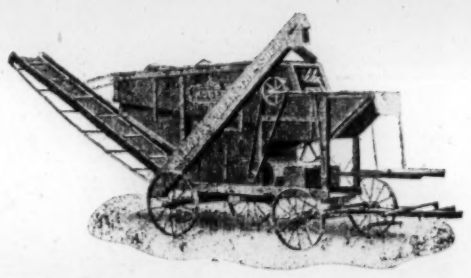

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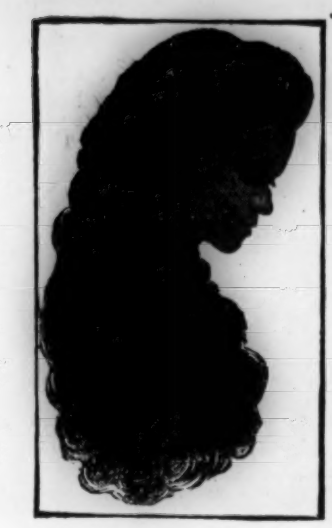

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carry it on. They were loud in their amens as the speakers talked on vital subjects. Mr. Hodges was Master of Ceremonies. Prof. Ware spoke in the interest of the Fayette County Training School and Prof. Rakestraw sowed the seed of a new life for the farmers, if they would farm intelligently, farm attentively, farm persistently, at the right time, in the right way, with the right kind of seed. The people furnished an auto to convey the speakers to and from the park.

Prof. Rakestraw seemed to awake the spirit that Paul awoke; for the farmers cried, come hither and speak to us, like the cry from Macedonia.

On September 4th, Mr. Moffett, the Farm Demonstrator, took Prof. Rakestraw to visit some of the best farmers in Warren. There was a demonstration on one of the Persons' Farms. For miles one sees acres of land owned by one family, the Persons. Prof. Rakestraw held the audience spellbound and had many converts for the cause of better farming.

Space will not permit that I describe every detail of the trip, but suffice it to say that the tour was an educational revival that will have a most telling effect in the lives of the colored people of Fayette County, Tennessee.

Young People's Agricultural And Canning Club Hold Joint Meeting

The young people's Agricultural and Canning Club met at New Rising Star school Tuesday night, August 29th, at 7:30. This was one of the most helpful and interesting meetings of its kind that has been held here at the school.

The central feature of the meeting was a program which follows: (1). Song, "Every-time I Feel the Spirit," "Lord, I Care Not For Riches." (2). Scripture Reading, by Miss Ida Graham. (3). Prayer, by Mr. R. A. Huggins. (4). Remarks by President, Prof. K. A. Huggins. (5). Selection by the Glee Club. (6). Discussion: "What I am doing in my Home Garden," led by Miss Iola Myers. (7). Solo—Miss O. A. Graham. (8). Recitation, Miss Jimmie Motley. (9). Duet, Misses Ida Graham and Ella Carlton. (10). Debate: Resolved: That the Boll Weevil is a blessing to Macon County.

Affirmative: Mr. Augustus Mason and Miss Ida Graham.

Negative: Mr. Joseph Motley and Miss O. A. Graham.

The judges were, Rev. A. L. Huggins, Mr. J. D. Carlton and Mrs. J. R. Barney. The debate was won in favor of the negatives. The Debate was a very interesting feature of the program.

THE RURAL SCHOOL TERM

To get a clear understanding of this question of the rural school term we must distinguish between the theoretical or possible school term and the actual school term. By the theoretical or possible rural school term we mean the legal rural school term, that is, the time school is legally kept open to all rural pupils who may desire to attend school in any one year. By the actual school term we mean the actual time, on the average, that all rural pupils enrolled on the school register actually attend school during the year.

In theory, the North Atlantic States have a rural school term of 159.7 days, but in practice, because of the poor average daily attendance, the actual rural school term is less than 120 days; in theory, in the South Atlantic States it is 119.5 days, but in practice, because of the poor average daily attendance, it is less than 80 days; in theory, in the South Central States, it is 117.6 days, but in practice, because of the poor average daily attendance, it is only 65 days, in theory, in the North Central States it is 152.7 days, but in practice, because of the poor average daily attendance, it is only 109 days, in theory, in Western States it is 145 days, but in practice, because of the poor average daily attendance, it is only 101.5 days.

It must be remembered that these figures deal only with the average length of the rural school term as based upon the enrollment of pupils in rural schools. No attempt is made to take into consideration the large number of rural pupils who should have been enrolled but who were not because of a lax

enforcement of compulsory attendance law or an entire lack of such laws, or on account of ignorant or selfish parents who kept their children out of school for the purpose of coining their own flesh and blood into a few paltry dollars — or worse still, allowed their children to grow up in idleness and ignorance.

The Sunday School Lesson

By Rev. G. L. Imes,
Dean of Bible Training School, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama

October 22 — Paul's Defense Before Agrippa

The series of accusations and trials recorded here by Luke gives us some idea of the nature of the difficulties that Paul met in his effort to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ among Jews and Gentiles. Sometimes it was the prejudice of his countrymen that blocked his way; again it was the cupidity and greed of his judges; sometimes it was envy; sometimes it was fear. But Paul met them bravely and used every occasion as an opportunity to declare the glorious gospel of the Son of God.

In this lesson we find him before Agrippa, King of the Syrian Province, wise tolerant and experienced. Governor after governor had for one reason and another refused to make a decision of Paul's case. And when Agrippa visited Festus at Cesarea, Festus found it a good occasion to pass the responsibility over to him. Paul was not only satisfied but delighted to have this opportunity to plead his case before one whom he knew to be not only just but well informed of the issues involved. Encouraged by such a prospect he makes what is in every way the most noble and eloquent presentation of his cause preserved to us anywhere. He uses the same outline that he used when he spoke to the crowd from the castle steps; but on this occasion he develops his theme with a fullness and symmetry that does not fear any prejudice in his hearers. The grace and beauty of his introduction in compliment to Agrippa are not excelled anywhere else in literature. With eloquence and force he tells the story of his youth and early training, of his persecution of the church, reaching the climax in the story of his conversion. Thence onward he moved with an assured and convincing argument for the high Providence directing his mission. He pleads that his work is but the fulfillment of the hopes of the Jews themselves, did they but grasp the spirit and not the letter of all that Moses had given them.

Festus, crafty and designing, is nevertheless moved; but it is to charge Paul with madness. Agrippi, too, is caught by the force of his words but seeks to hide his confusion in a diverting remark which Paul instantly turns to a penetrating shaft for his own heart. "I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

But Agrippa is at least satisfied that there is no case against Paul; and he would have given him his freedom, but Paul himself had previously appealed to Caesar from the decision of Festus who had sought in some way to turn him over to the Jews. To Caesar therefore he must go; from this time his feet are directed towards Rome.

For Every Day: Life is a growing thing; Everything that goes to make up life grows with it; religion no less than science. There is no final revelation in religion; the plans and purposes of God are progressive. Keep therefore a kind heart and an open mind; lest haply we be found to be resisting God.

October 29th. — **The Voyage.** — Acts 27:1-38.

Paul begins at once his journey to Rome where his case will be heard by the highest Roman authority. A certain Julius is commissioned to take Paul with other prisoners to Rome. It would seem that Paul obtained special consideration, even though a prisoner; perhaps as a result of the impression made upon Agrippa. For, stopping at one port en route, he was permitted there to visit his friends. At another port a change of ships was made and they continued their journey towards Rome. But unfavorable winds arose and further sailing became hazardous. But the captain had a rich cargo and a large passenger list and he was willing to take the risk in view of the profit to be gained. At this point Paul protested to the centurion, but he was perhaps as willing to fulfill his commission and deliver his prisoners as the captain was to get the benefit of prompt arrival in port. Just then a favorable wind arose and the argument in favor of continuing the journey was clinched; the ship sailed on.

But this good fortune suddenly turned; a tempest rose, and they were driven helplessly before the wind. For days they wallowed in the open sea and finally gave up all hope of salvation from the storm. Here Paul steps forward and virtually assumes command of the ship. Before his judgment had been scorned; now he is obeyed with acrity. Nor does he hesitate to remind them of the way in which his judgment had been scorned. It would seem ungenerous of Paul to do so, did it not also serve the purpose of impressing him with the soundness of his judgment for such a time of peril. But his first word was a word of confidence and cheer. And it comes, not out of his own vanity, nor from an inflated idea of his own skill as a seaman. It comes from his intimate fellowship with God, from his steadfast confidence in the divine providence overshadowing his life. In the midst of all the turmoil of the storm he had been given a clear vision of their ultimate safety, and a word of courage and cheer. From this time on Paul virtually takes command. He stills their panic; the counsels of fear are over-ruled. His own courage becomes contagious. His public thanksgiving to God in the breaking of bread was like a tonic for their unsettled nerves. From that time on they proceeded with order and precision with ordinary precautions for their safety and finally gained the land in safety. The ship was lost but 276 souls were safe and sound.

For Every Day: The counsels of greed lead to destruction: The councils of fear end in death. Some turn to religion when they are in a panic: The religion of a righteous man prevents panic.

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